

The Arbiter

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Summary: A brief look at the Arbiter leading his troops against the Prophets...

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He glowered at me, focusing those burning amber eyes on my own darkened orbs. A moment longer of that blistering stare and he turned from me to focus on another recruit. Immediately, I dropped my gaze to the cold, purple hued deck, attempting to alleviate my sudden sense of vertigo by intently scrutinizing the many indentations and grooves in the metal alloy. How could he do that every single time, no matter how well I prepared myself? Despite my multitude of sessions spent staring and growling into reflective surfaces while imagining the Arbiter before me, I still became a subservient wretch in his presence.

Perhaps it is my training, or maybe it is my lowly rank of recruit, which has instilled in me the unconscious need to respect and serve my superiors. No, I do not respect them, I fear them, but him blast it all, I can respect him. He's a natural leader, a strong warrior ten times that of myself, and by the gods, I'd go to my death at his side, confident that my life would not be used in vain.

That deep resonating voice filled the phantom's tight quarters as he turned from the last blue-armored soldier, "We have been betrayed, my brothers. Our Prophets have deceived us and cast us from the holy city of High Charity. They have replaced us with the lowly beasts called Brutes and slaughtered our high council. They've led us to the brink of annihilation with false promises and half truths."

I did not know of what he spoke, but I found myself believing him regardless. There was something magnetic about him, something powerful and demanding of my attention. He was cool, determined, and the sorrowful bitterness of one who'd lost all he ever believed in,

rang clear in those deep reverberating vocals. He was as a zealot whose faith had been irreparably damaged: lost, confused, and understandably enraged.

His was a quiet anger which radiated out from him in the form of a wordless humbling force. Each of us bristled as he strode by. My mandibles flared and an unconscious growl managed to slip out. Somehow we were all feeding off of that energy seething from him, taking it and honing it to supplement our own. Morale rose with every step he took and every word he spoke. So long as he led us into battle, the Brutes, and the treacherous Prophets did not stand a chance.

"I am sorry to tell you, brothers, but The Great Journey the Prophets have preached to us for generations is a lie. I have spoken to the Oracle and, in case I was not believed, I recorded its words," He produced a data module and in one deft movement, he inserted it into a waiting receptacle.

Over the Phantom's broadband communications system, which transmitted to every vessel in the fleet, a small, analytical sounding voice clearly belonging to one of the holy Oracles blared forth, "Halo, what you keep mistakenly referring to as a 'Sacred Ring', is a weapon of last resort created specifically to contain the Flood parasite. Its function is to eradicate all sources of nourishment for them, meaning, quite frankly...you."

A collective gasp ran through our ranks and a moment of paralysis set in, before his mighty voice rumbled over every last speaker system, "Be calm, my brethren! I know how you all must feel, for I've felt it myself; abandonment and betrayal! Your oaths, your beliefs, and your convictions have been defiled and stolen in one swift stroke. And who has done this to you? The wretched Prophets, the monsters who, knowingly, lied to you all of your lives," A roar went up in each and every Phantom, each Seraph fighter, each carrier, each destroyer, and each frigate, "Remember your honor! Remember your duty to your people and to the soldier next to you! Remember your fathers, your sons, and the sacrifices they made; all of it in vain! Avenge them, bring your anger to bear on those that deceived you, those that have killed your kin, and wasted the lives of those that came before you!"

"Bring to these false prophets the full fury of our ancestors! Today, we march toward our ****true**** destiny, and our ****own**** salvation, on our ****own**** terms, through glorious battle!"

A cry rang throughout the fleet. We knew our time had come. In either victory or defeat; our fate was to be decided on this hour. I would remember that day for decades to come. It was the day our Arbiter showed us the truth, and granted us deliverance through his noble deeds. Neither a greater warrior, nor greater Eliteâ€|has yet to draw breath.

End
file.